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CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCES SECOND YEAR RESULTS FOR PROPOSITION 36

Treatment Completion Rates Among Key Findings

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) today announced that 10,481 individuals completed drug treatment in 2002-03 through the Proposition 36 program. This finding, which is in line with completion rates for other drug treatment programs, is included in UCLA's second annual independent evaluation of Proposition 36, a voter approved initiative that provides treatment for non-violent drug offenders in lieu of incarceration.

"Despite possessing such characteristics as methamphetamine addiction, little prior exposure to drug treatment and long-term drug use histories, thousands of clients have made it through treatment," said ADP Director Kathryn Jett.

The second-year program evaluation indicates that Proposition 36 clients are faring as well as other criminal justice clients or the general population in the treatment system. Of those entering treatment, 34 percent completed the program. An additional 37.8 percent left the program, but made satisfactory progress or remained in treatment long enough to indicate likely benefit. Specifically, nearly 54 percent of Proposition 36 clients completed 90 days of treatment, which is considered the standard for a beneficial effect. Such rates for length of stay are typical among drug users referred to treatment by criminal justice.

"For those not completing treatment, there is considerable evidence that even minimal exposure to treatment will provide clients with knowledge of their addiction and recognition of how to seek help," said Jett.

In a sample of clients with high-severity drug problems, placement in outpatient was more common for Proposition 36 clients than those in other programs. Although offenders whose drug problems are severe can benefit from residential treatment, counties have expressed a desire to move clients into treatment quickly, and it is faster to place a client in outpatient care.

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The evaluation found that the characteristics of the Proposition 36 population remained stable when compared to characteristics seen in the first year. Slightly more than half reported methamphetamine as their primary drug of choice and half entered drug treatment for the first time. Fifty-seven percent had drug use histories of longer than 11 years, 50,335 offenders agreed to participate in the program and 35,947 entered treatment.

“We continue to see high-severity users,” said Jett. “Prior to Proposition 36, law enforcement knew that methamphetamine was an epidemic, but the magnitude of the problem was not seen in our treatment systems. More than half of Proposition 36’s offenders are receiving treatment for methamphetamine addiction and they are doing as well as individuals with other, less severe addictions.”

Also known as the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act, Proposition 36 was approved by the voters in November 2000 and became operational in all 58 counties by July 1, 2001. The ongoing evaluation of the program will conclude on June 30, 2006. Future evaluations will describe crime trends before and after Proposition 36 and analyze criminal recidivism, drug use and cost offset. The complete Evaluation of the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act 2003 Report is available online at <http://www.uclaisap.org/> (as of Sept. 23, 2004).

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